

**FROM:** Rachel Nagin, Washington, D.C.

When I became a WILPF member a year ago, I was in the process of moving to Tucson, Arizona. At the time, moving seemed like an unfathomable trapeze act, one during which I would surely perish (if not from the proverbial leap, then from sunburn and dehydration). Within a month, most of my fears had abated, and I found myself in my first meeting with the local WILPF branch. There, I met Mary MacEwan, a WILPF member who had marched with her mother and her mother's suffragist sisters. Meeting her struck me immediately in two unique ways. First, even though she was 80 years my senior, she and I both came to WILPF through our mothers and through marches. Second, perhaps most importantly, her story called me to reassess and recommit myself again to fighting for social justice throughout my life.

My mother found WILPF and other Cleveland area women's organizations in her early twenties during the 70s. Feminist activism became a central aspect of her life that motivated her to finish her undergraduate degree while raising her daughters to be politically activated. Growing up, I saw the Picasso peace dove so often, I thought my mother had drawn it herself. Attending meetings, handing out flyers, actively engaging in strikes and rallies – that was my life, long before I knew this was not the norm.

Now at age 23, my politics have led me to believe deeply in the importance of sharing our stories. The moments where individuals choose to engage, choose to act, choose to join WILPF – these are the moments that are defining leaps. Like with Mary, I find these narratives build connections across personal histories and teach me why my life's work and why social justice work is important. Stories of my siblings in "the movement" embolden me to not be afraid and to not lose sight of the 200 year moment (thinking of 100 years past, 100 years in the future, holding both in my heart and mind when acting today). Mary's story reminded me that progress can happen as long as we tenaciously remain rooted in our ideals. She lived in a time when women were not fully recognized as citizens and now lives when women are running for and being appointed to the highest offices in the US government. It may take generations, but social justice only comes about when women like Mary keep marching.

As WILPF moves into its next century of activism, I think it is crucial we begin collecting the stories of WILPF members. Collecting them is, in many ways, an act of resistance against and a subversion of society's dominant oppressive narratives. The value of these stories, however, rests in reflection. Reflecting is a reminder of that moment when an individual activated: the spark that moved her footsteps to the present, the sense of urgency that charged her into the future. Remembering such a moment can reignite the flame and the

need to act. I know that WILPF is overflowing with unshared stories. Retelling and amplifying what called us to our organization will renew us.

It will not be enough, however, to simply gather these stories. I would like WILPF to use these stories to strengthen connections across geographical and generational gaps. At the crossroads of our journeys, we can find unifying values and needs that will call us to act. WILPF needs to move, to march, to carry on the torch of our foremothers. True, this is a new century with all sorts of technological marvels, but getting our boots out on the street is absolutely necessary. If our blood is not pumping and our hearts are not beating to the drum then we might as well dissolve.

There are so many issues WILPF members care about from Food Sovereignty, to gun control and nuclear disarmament, to anti-racist coalition building, to advancing the goals of 1325. We need to tell our stories about why these issues matter to us and we will march once more.